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Environment and sustainable development: implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/56/L.17/Rev.1

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with Rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

I. Request contained in the draft resolution

1. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 11 and 13 of draft resolution A/C.2/56/L.17/Rev.1, the General Assembly would:

> "*Decide* to include in the calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 2002-2003 the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, including the sixth ordinary session of the Conference of the Parties and meetings of its subsidiary bodies" (para. 11);
>
> "*Approve* the continuation of the current institutional linkage and related administrative arrangements between the United Nations Secretariat and the permanent secretariat of the Convention for a further five-year period, to be reviewed by the General Assembly and the Conference of the Parties not later than 31 December 2006" (para. 13).

II. Analysis of the proposals and full costs involved

2. With regard to the procedural aspects of paragraph 11 of the draft resolution, it should be noted that under its terms of reference, established by General Assembly resolution 43/222 of 21 December 1988, the responsibility for formulation of the calendar

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of the United Nations meetings and conferences rests with the Committee on Conferences, which makes the relevant proposals in that respect to the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee. It should also be recalled in this connection that by its resolution 45/248 B, section VI, of 21 December 1990, on issues of the procedures for administrative and budgetary matters, the General Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters,

(b) Also reaffirmed the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;

(c) Expressed its concern at the tendency of its substantive committees and other intergovernmental bodies to involve themselves in administrative and budgetary matters;

(d) Invited the Secretary-General to provide all intergovernmental bodies with the required information regarding procedures for administrative and budgetary matters.

3. The draft revised calendar of the United Nations meetings and conferences for the biennium 2002-2003 has been submitted by the Committee on Conferences to the General Assembly at its current session as a part of its annual report (see A/56/32, annex). The report is currently under review by the Fifth Committee in the context of agenda item 124, "Pattern of conferences". Upon completion of that review, the Fifth Committee will make its recommendations on the calendar of meetings and conferences to the General Assembly accordingly.

4. As to the substance of the proposals contained in paragraphs 11 and 13 of the draft resolution, it should be recalled that within the framework of the institutional linkage between the Secretariat and the permanent secretariat of the Convention, the scope of the administrative arrangements, including financial, personnel and conference-servicing support to the Convention, has been initially approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/198 of 18 December 1997 on the basis of proposals made by the Secretary-General (see A/52/549).

5. Within the scope of those arrangements, the General Assembly agreed at that time that the conference-servicing requirements relating to servicin meetings of the Conference of the Parties to th Convention and its subsidiary bodies would b included in the calendar of meetings and conference of the United Nations for the biennium 1998-1999 Since then, the meetings of the Convention bodies hav been included in the calendar of meetings an conferences of the United Nations on a biennial basi and the costs relating to conference-servicing of thos meetings have been met from the United Nation regular budget. At the same time, all othe administrative support and services to the Convention permanent secretariat has been provided on reimbursable basis. Administratively, the responsibility for providing for the full range of administrative an conference-servicing support to the Convention and it permanent secretariat has been delegated to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

6. It should also be recalled that in the course of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted his oral statement of programme budget implications with respect to draft resolution A/C.2/55/L.34, entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa". Inter alia, it was stated in that document that the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and its subsidiary bodies would be taken into account at a time of preparation of a draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003. Those meetings have been programmed and included in the draft revised calendar for the next biennium, which is currently under review by the Fifth Committee, as indicated in paragraph 3 above.

7. It was further indicated in the oral statement of programme budget implications that the conference-servicing requirements for the biennium 2002-2003 of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies would be met from a provision to be made under section 2, General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, which would be not only for meetings programmed at the time of budget preparation but also for meetings authorized subsequently, provided that the number and distribution of meetings are consistent with the pattern of meetings per year experienced in the past.

8. Based on the programme of meetings of the Convention for the biennium 2002-2003, the conference-servicing requirements for the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies are estimated in the amount of $1,879,700 at full cost. Those estimates are based on the level and composition of the services for the Convention meetings as detailed in the draft revised calendar for the biennium 2002-2003 (see A/56/32, annex).

9. In connection with the possibility of continuing current arrangements for providing conference services to Convention bodies from within existing United Nations resources, the experience of the biennium 2000-2001 and the levels of the conference-servicing workload reflected in the draft revised calendar for the biennium 2002-2003 have demonstrated that the number and distribution of United Nations meetings are no longer consistent with the past pattern of meetings per year. The current demand for conference services for the Organization as a whole has far exceeded the annual average pattern of meetings experienced over the previous five years. The overall number of the United Nations meetings to be serviced by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services during the biennium 2002-2003 has increased by 9.6 per cent, compared to the number of meetings serviced in the biennium 1998-1999.

10. On the other hand, the permanent secretariat of the Convention has notified the Secretariat of a decision by the Conference of the Parties to establish an additional subsidiary body, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, which was taken by the Conference in the context of approval of the Convention budget for the biennium 2002-2003. That change in the composition of the Convention intergovernmental machinery has increased the overall level of conference-services requirements for the Convention, as compared to the services provided for the Convention in the past.

11. In the circumstances, it is no longer possible to provide a full range of conference-servicing to the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies during the biennium 2002-2003 from within the resources proposed under section 2, Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003. Such services to the Convention bodies can now be provided only on a reimbursable basis.

12. In summary, the Secretariat, through the United Nations Office at Geneva, will continue making available to the Convention intergovernmental bodies and to the permanent secretariat of the Convention the full range of support services, as and when it may require, provided that those services would be extended on a reimbursable basis. The proposed change in the arrangements for the conference-servicing of the Convention would be reported to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, following the provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/248 B, section VI, on issues of the procedures for administrative and budgetary matters and in line with the established procedure for programme budget implications.

III. Conclusions

13. **Should the Second Committee decide to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of draft resolution A/56/L.17/Rev.1, it would be understood that conference services for the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, and its subsidiary bodies would be provided by the United Nations Secretariat during the biennium 2002-2003 on the basis of reimbursement of the cost of services from the resources of the Convention, which would represent a modification of the arrangements initially established by General Assembly resolution 52/198.**

14. **It would also be understood that the arrangements referred to in paragraph 13 above would constitute the means by which the administrative arrangements within the meaning of paragraph 13 of the draft resolution would be implemented in the biennium 2002-2003. On that understanding, no additional appropriation under the regular budget of the United Nations would be required as a result of the adoption of draft resolution A/56/L.17/Rev.1.**